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Description

“Maʿrʿf Aurat” by Khalida Hussain (1937-2019)

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Abstract:

Khalida Hussain (1937–2019) was born in Lahore and started her literary career by publishing short stories in the journal Adab-e Latʿf during the 1960s. She took a break from writing for more than a decade after her marriage. She remerged again on the literary scene in 1981 with the publication of her short story collection, Paʿchʿn, followed by five more short story collections and a novel. Hussain is known for introducing a new trend on the Urdu literary horizon as she experimented with the idea of abstract and non-linear narratives. She was very skillful in her craft, using a technique, John Gardner calls ‘the psychic lens’. Every now and then she would draw the reader in to her thoughts then zoom out and offer a more aerial view of the plot. Her technique differed from stream-of consciousness, which her contemporaries employed, as she was careful not to isolate the reader into the confines of her mind. She was also one of the few writers who despite living in intolerant times under dictatorship, was not afraid to draw on Hindu mythology or Sufi traditions as she explored spirituality in her writings, particularly the concept of wujʿd through existentialism. Hussain’s narratives serve as a source of inspiration for challenging societal norms and advocating for positive change, making her work profoundly relevant in today’s world. Her compact yet dazzling body of work endures as a clarion call to raising feminist consciousness, destined to inspire generations in the quest for equality and freedom. She wasn’t just an author; she was a humanist icon, her stories, a powerful voice for change.

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Works cited

<https://www.rekhta.org/ebooks/masroof-aurat-khalida-hussain-ebooks>

Woolf, Virginia. The Death of the Mother: and other Essays. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942.

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